

Representative
Dave Quall

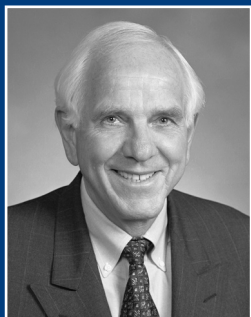


House of
Representatives

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

 Printed on recycled paper

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
Washington State
Department of Printing



Representative
Dave Quall
40th District

301 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Phone:
360-786-7800

E-mail: quall.dave@leg.wa.gov

Website: [http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/
members/quall/](http://hdc.leg.wa.gov/members/quall/)

Toll-free:
1-800-562-6000

Hearing impaired:
1-800-635-9993

Committees:
• Education CHAIR
• Economic Development,
Agriculture & Trade

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
40th DISTRICT
DAVE QUALL

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



EDUCATION
CHAIR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
AGRICULTURE & TRADE

Dear neighbors:

My colleagues and I have heard a rising level of concern among parents and educators about the high school class of 2008 – the first to be required to pass the 10th grade WASL in order to graduate. People worry that some students won't get their diplomas because of this requirement.

As chair of the House Education Committee, I want to report to you about what the Legislature is doing to help our students meet academic standards. I look forward to hearing your comments on this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Dave Quall
State Representative



Why are we insisting that students meet academic standards?

In 1983, the publication of “A Nation at Risk” raised the alarm about the inadequacy of our schools. All across the country, people were asking “why Johnny can’t read.”

At that time, we had no academic standards. Students who earned straight Ds marched across the stage to receive their high school diplomas side by side with students who earned straight As. Employers complained that a high school diploma meant nothing, and that many graduates couldn’t even fill out a job application.

In 1993, we set out to make high school diplomas meaningful again. Washington teachers, parents, and business people wrote our academic standards – standards that reflect what every young person must know and be able to do to get a job and function as a citizen in the 21st century.

We’ve always known that meeting these standards would be a challenge – especially since our goal was to get ALL students to do so, not just the college-bound or the affluent.

During the past decade, our schools have made steady progress. Each year, the number of students who pass the WASL increases. Those increases will accelerate even more – especially at the 10th grade level – when students know the test really has consequences.

But getting students to pass the test is not the goal. The goal is to actually EDUCATE our students. The test is merely a measure of whether we are doing that.

What will happen to students who don’t pass the 10th grade WASL?

It’s important for you to know that in 2004, the legislature enacted substantial changes to provide a safety net for students who don’t pass the 10th grade WASL on their first try:

- Students take the WASL in the spring of their sophomore year. They will be given **four additional opportunities to retake the test** during their junior and senior years.
- The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has developed **alternative assessments** – that is, other ways for students to prove they know how to read, write and do math at the levels represented by the 10th grade WASL. Those assessments are being pilot tested this year, and the legislature is almost certain to approve them – and perhaps others as well. Work is also underway to consider an **appeals process** that could exempt students who come to this state as juniors and seniors, and make other exceptions in special circumstances.
- In the future, students who don’t pass earlier WASLs in the 4th and 7th grade will get **more focused attention** to help them be ready to pass by the time they reach 10th grade.
- Some **special education students are exempt** from the WASL requirement.
- Work is underway to develop **community college high school completion programs** to pick up English language learners, and other students as well, who need more time to master the skills they need to earn a diploma.

This year, we will also make a major investment – probably about \$40 million – in remediation programs for high school students. This new funding will make it possible for high schools to offer tutoring, before and after school programs, and/or summer school for struggling students.

In the meantime, we need to stay focused on helping all kids stay in school and learn.

Every student will need a very high level of skill and knowledge to succeed in today’s complex, competitive world. We cannot go back to the days when we awarded diplomas just for sitting through 12 years of classes.

Our schools have come a long way in the last ten years, and we are not going to let all the progress they’ve made unravel.

Should we change the graduation requirement?

There will be a lot of discussion about whether to back away from our current graduation requirements. We are all listening very carefully to a variety of perspectives on this question.

But we’re not sure yet whether this is the year to make any change that may be necessary. After all, we don’t know yet how this year’s sophomores will do on the test. They will take the test in March and April, and we will get their test scores in early June. Many students who miss on the first try will probably go to summer school and pass when they retake the test in August.

By the time the 2007 legislative session begins, we will be in a better position to judge whether any change is needed. That’s why many of us don’t want to rush to judgment. We would like to continue to study all the various suggested changes to the graduation requirement after this session adjourns.

We will keep the faith with our students and schools. We want to keep our expectations high. We think our kids are as smart as any in the world. And we have great faith in the dedication and ability of our teachers and principals.